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AUTHORITY

PART TWO OF SEVEN

HEROES IN COLLISION

QUEST-STARING THE
**Fantastic
Four!**

ASSAULT ON EON!

WENDELL VAUGHN... THE FIRST EARTH MAN EVER APPOINTED PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE. BONDED TO THE ENERGY-TRANSFORMING QUANTUM-BANDS THAT ARE BOTH WEAPONS AND SYMBOLS OF HIS STATION, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE TO DEFEND ALL LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE FROM COSMIC EVIL!

STAN LEE PRESENTS... QUASAR!

SOMEWHERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MILKY WAY, TWO COSMIC BEINGS MEET. THE LARGER OF THE TWO IS ONE OF THE GREAT ABSTRACT ENTITIES OF OUR UNIVERSE... NEVER BEFORE GLIMPSED BY A SINGLE DENIZEN OF EARTH.

PROLOGUE:

THE SMALLER OF THE TWO IS A DISEMBODIED SEEKER OF KNOWLEDGE WHO WAS LAST SEEN IN THE VICINITY OF SATURN QUESTIONING THE ETHEREAL ETERNAL KRONOS ABOUT LIFE ON THE HIGHER PLANES OF EXISTENCE.

AS WE MEASURE TIME ON EARTH, THIS ENCOUNTER OCCURRED IN THE RECENT PAST.

...A QUESTION FOR YOU THEN, ANOMALY... IF THE UNIVERSE ITSELF SPANG FORTH FROM AN ANOMALOUS SINGULARITY IN THE STUFF OF NON-SPACE/ NON-TIME...

...AND YOU ARE THE VERY EMBODIMENT OF ALL ANOMALIES THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE, THEN CAN IT NOT BE SAID THAT YOU ARE THE GREAT AUTHOR OF THE UNIVERSE?

THE STALKING HORSE

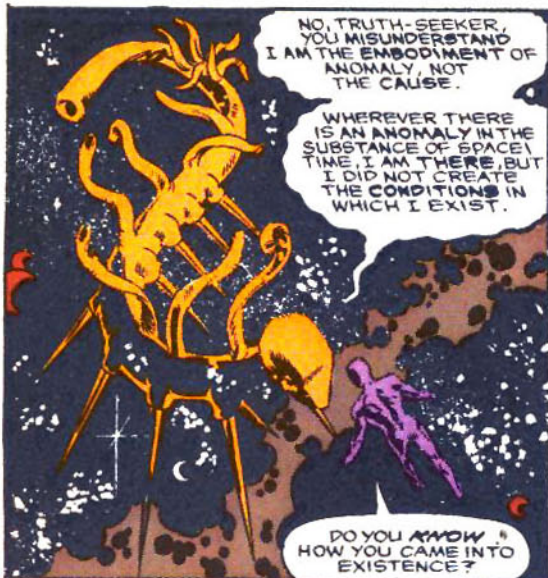
MARK GRUENWALD
WRITER
PAUL SECTON
COLORIST

GREG CAPULLO
PENCILER
LEN KAMINSKI
MANAGING EDITOR

KEITH WILLIAMS
INKER
HOWARD MACKIE
REGULAR EDITOR

JANICE CHIAN
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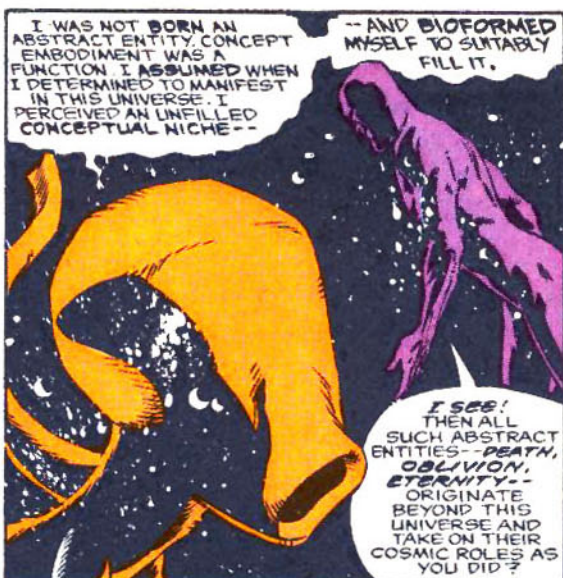
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NO, TRUTH-SEEKER, YOU MISUNDERSTAND I AM THE EMBODIMENT OF ANOMALY, NOT THE CAUSE.

WHEREVER THERE IS AN ANOMALY IN THE SUBSTANCE OF SPACE/ TIME, I AM THERE, BUT I DID NOT CREATE THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH I EXIST.

DO YOU *KNOW* HOW YOU CAME INTO EXISTENCE?



I WAS NOT BORN AN ABSTRACT ENTITY, CONCEPT EMBODIMENT WAS A FUNCTION I ASSUMED WHEN I DETERMINED TO MANIFEST IN THIS UNIVERSE. I PERCEIVED AN UNFILLED CONCEPTUAL NICHE--

--AND BIOFORMED MYSELF TO SUITABLY FILL IT.

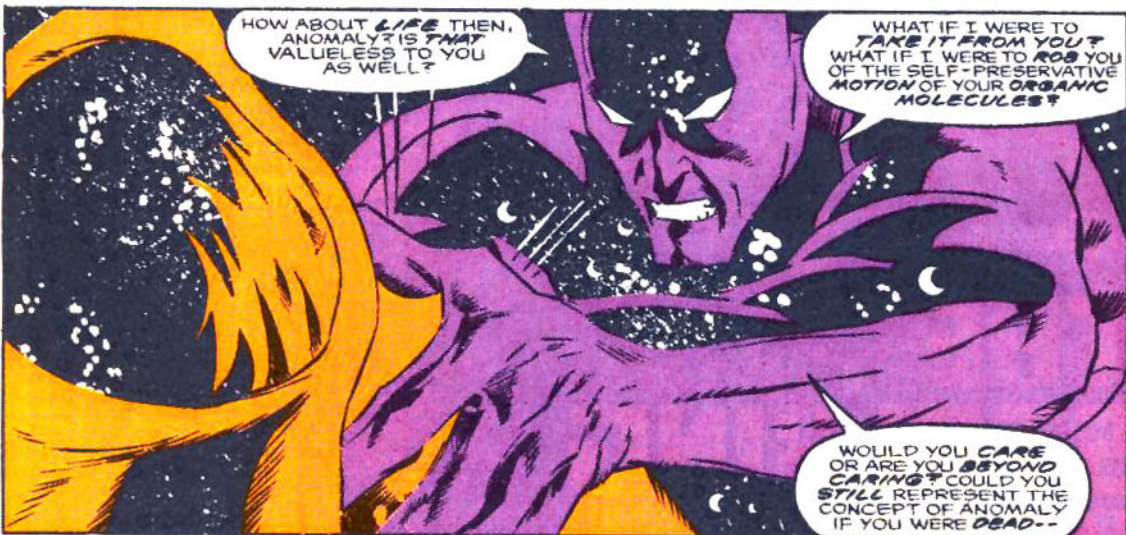
I SEE! THEN ALL SUCH ABSTRACT ENTITIES--*DEATH, OBLIVION, ETERNITY*-- ORIGINATE BEYOND THIS UNIVERSE AND TAKE ON THEIR COSMIC ROLES AS YOU DID?



PERHAPS PERHAPS NOT, I AM ANOMALY, AFTER ALL..

WELL, YOU'VE BEEN MOST *ENLIGHTENING*, THANK YOU FOR YOUR *TIME*.

TIME IS NOT PRECIOUS TO ME: TO A TIME BEING LIKE ETERNITY OR EON PERHAPS, BUT NOT ME.



HOW ABOUT *LIFE* THEN, ANOMALY? IS *THAT* VALUELESS TO YOU AS WELL?

WHAT IF I WERE TO *TAKE IT FROM YOU*? WHAT IF I WERE TO *ROB* YOU OF THE SELF-PRESERVATIVE MOTION OF YOUR *ORGANIC MOLECULES*?

WOULD YOU *CARE* OR ARE YOU *BEYOND CARING*? COULD YOU *STILL* REPRESENT THE CONCEPT OF ANOMALY IF YOU WERE *DEAD*--



OBLIVION! INTO YOUR BOSOM I DISPATCH THIS *SPIRIT!*

TIME: THE PRESENT. PLACE: THE EDGE OF EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE.

THE PLAYERS:
QUASAR, EARTH'S
FORMOST COSMIC
CHAMPION, NOW
UNCONSCIOUS
INSIDE AN ENERGY-
BUBBLE OF HIS
OWN MAKING...

**THE JACK OF
HEARTS,** LEADER
OF A RAGTAG BAND
OF SUPERHUMAN
REFUGEES BOUND
FOR THEIR NATIVE
EARTH...

THE PRESENCE,
NUCLEAR-POWERED
RUSSIAN DISSIDENT
AND FELLOW
REFUGEE...

...AND STARLIGHT,
FORMER SOVIET SUPER
HERO PERSUADED BY
THE PRESENCE TO BE
HIS COSMICALLY-
ENDOWED
CONSORT...

THE SITUATION:
DIRE.

NOW QUICKLY--
**FINISH HIM
OFF!** POINT BLANK
BLASTS TO HIS
TEMPLES SHOULD
BE SUFFICIENT
TO DO IT.

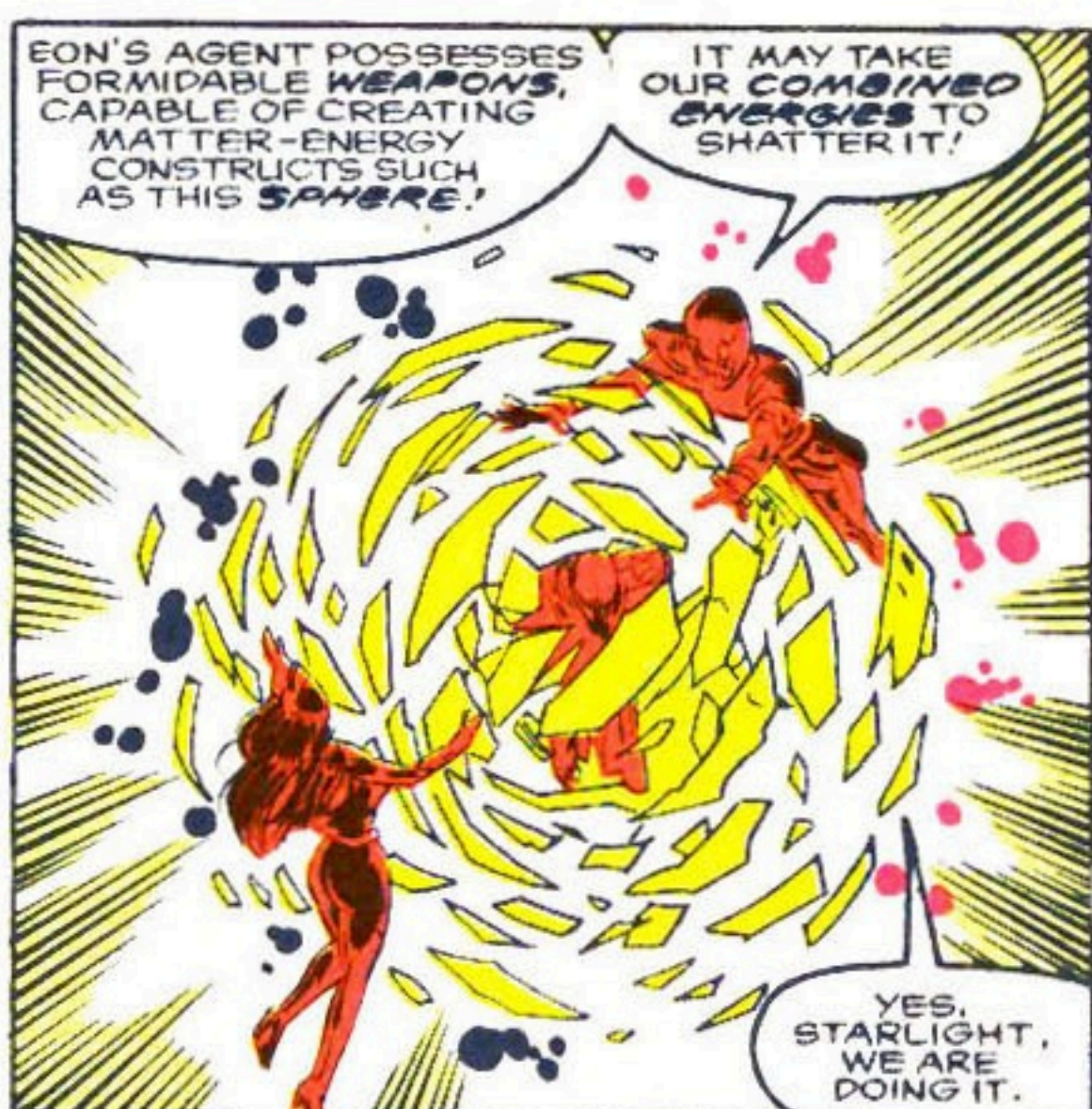
YOU MEAN
KILL HIM?
I--WAVE?

IF YOU DO NOT
HAVE THE **STOMACH**
TO COMPLETE THE TASK,
THEN I **SHALL** STAND
BACK WHILE I **SMATTER**
THIS FEEBLE SPHERE!

AND ONCE QUASAR'S
OUT OF THE WAY,
NOTHING CAN
STOP US FROM
MAKING OUR
PRESENCE KNOWN
TO **EON!**

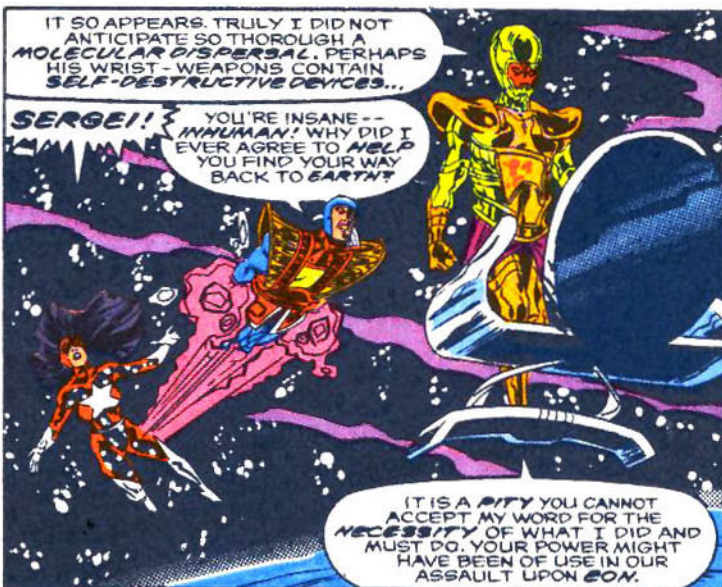
EON? WHO'S EON?
WHAT'S THIS ALL
ABOUT, SERGEI?

EON IS ONLY THE
GREATEST MENACE
TO **EXISTENCE**
OUR WORLD HAS
EVER **SEEN!**





YOU-- YOU
HEARTLESS-- YOU
DISINTEGRATED
HIM!

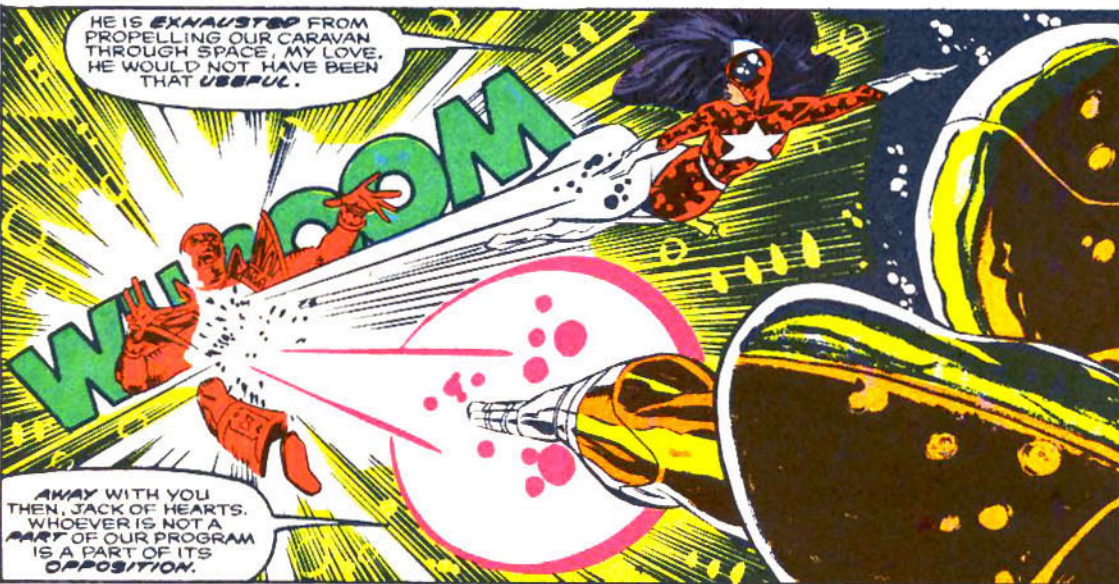


IT SO APPEARS. TRULY I DID NOT
ANTICIPATE SO THOROUGH A
MOLECULAR DISPERAL. PERHAPS
HIS WRIST- WEAPONS CONTAIN
SELF-DESTRUCTIVE DEVICES...

SERGEI!

YOU'RE INSANE--
HAWKMAN! WHY DID I
EVER AGREE TO HELP
YOU FIND YOUR WAY
BACK TO EARTH?

IT IS A PITY YOU CANNOT
ACCEPT MY WORD FOR THE
NECESSITY OF WHAT I DID AND
MUST DO. YOUR POWER MIGHT
HAVE BEEN OF USE IN OUR
ASSAULT UPON EON.

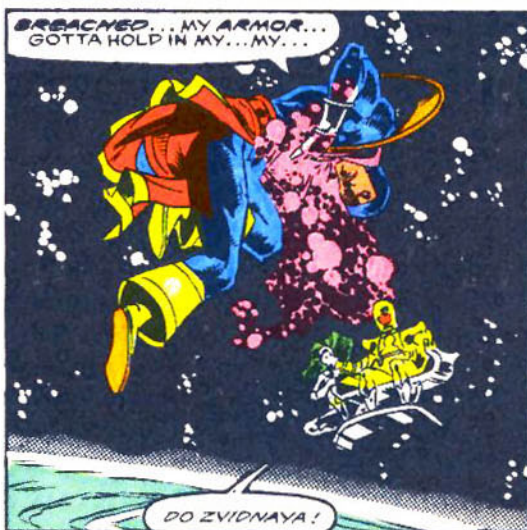


HE IS EXHAUSTED FROM
PROPELLING OUR CARAVAN
THROUGH SPACE, MY LOVE.
HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN
THAT USEFUL.

AWAY WITH YOU
THEN, JACK OF HEARTS.
WHOEVER IS NOT A
PART OF OUR PROGRAM
IS A PART OF ITS
OPPOSITION.



OHhhh... I
DON'T FEEL
SO GOOD...



BREACHED... MY ARMOR...
GOTTA HOLD IN MY... MY...

DO ZVIDNAYA!



COME BACK HERE
AND SEE WHAT
YOU'VE DONE
TO ME!

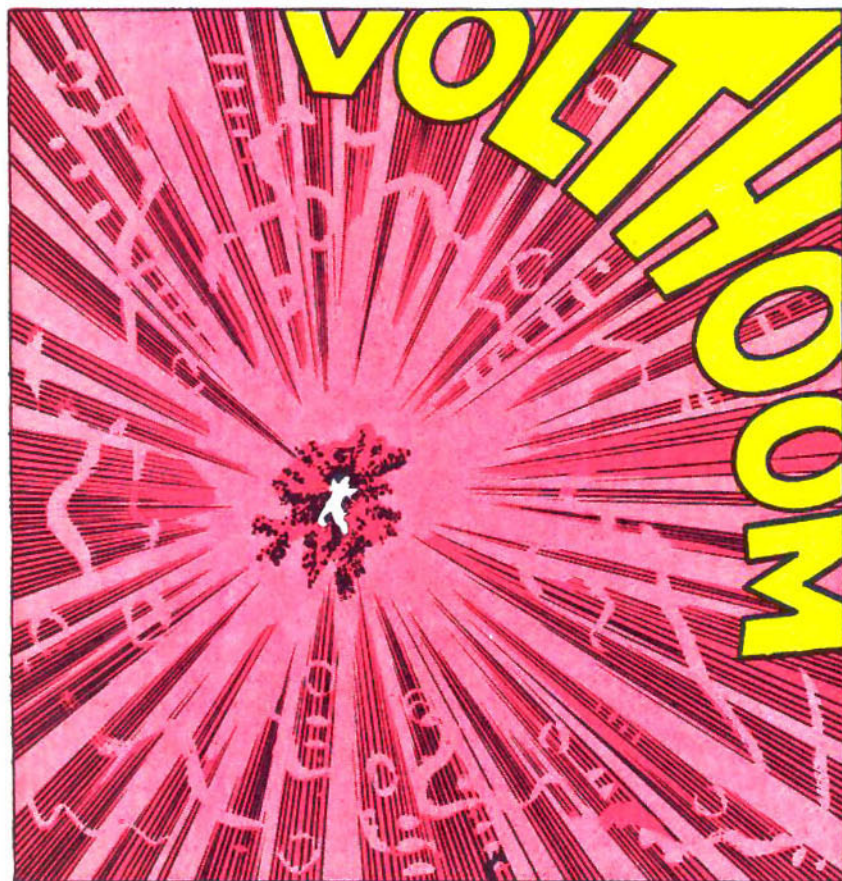
THE ZERO-
ENERGY
INSIDE ME--
LEAKING OUT!

I-I'M GOING
TO EXPLODE!



BLAST IT
ALL. IF I'M
GOING TO BLOW
UP, I'M GOING
TO TAKE YOU
TWO WITH ME!

TO PROPEL HIMSELF
TOWARD US, HE WILL
HAVE TO TAKE HANDS OFF
HOLES IN ARMOR.



AS I THOUGHT.

THE SHOCKWAVE
HE HAS GENERATED
WILL TAKE US TO
MOTHER WORLD
ALL THE FASTER.

FOR ALMOST A MINUTE, **SILENCE** RULES EARTH'S EXOSPHERE...

BUT THEN...
I'M BACK.

WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

NO ONE TO MARVEL AT THE WAY I USED THE **ENERGY** OF THE GOLDEN EGG-MAN'S BLAST TO **QUANTUM-JUMP** A FEW LIGHT-SECONDS TO **SAFETY**?

BETTER QUANTUM-SCAN THE VICINITY.

JACKO'S HURLING AWAY FROM EARTH LIKE A SPENT COMET.

THE **EGG-MAN** AND **BABE** ARE HEADING EARTHWARD IN ONE DIRECTION...

...THE REST OF THE **SPACE CARAVAN** THEY WERE IN ANOTHER!

OH, GREAT.

WHO DO I GO **AFTER**?

DIDN'T EXACTLY HEAR WHAT THE **EGG-MAN** WAS **BLATHERING** ABOUT, DRIFTING IN AND OUT OF **CONSCIOUSNESS** LIKE I WAS, BUT JUDGING FROM THE BLAST HE GAVE ME, HE'S THE **HEAVIEST THREAT** OF THE LOT.

ON THE **OTHER** HAND, THE **CARAVAN** LOOKS LIKE IT'S ABOUT TO **BURN UP** FROM THE FRICTION OF AN OUT OF CONTROL **ATMOSPHERIC ENTRY**.

I KNOW IT'S GOT **PASSENGERS** INSIDE - I **SAW** ONE OF THEM. *

*LAST ISSUE.

LOOKS LIKE KEEPING THEM FROM **FLASH-FRYING** IS MY FIRST PRIORITY.

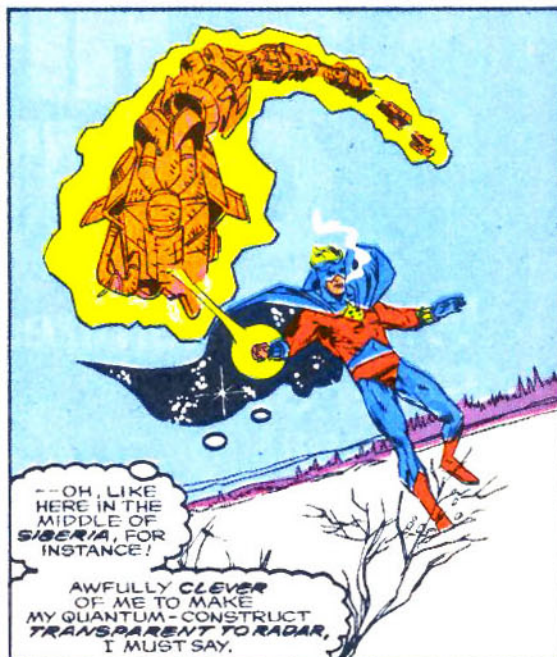
HOPE TO SEE YOU **LATER**, JACK!

THERE IT IS!

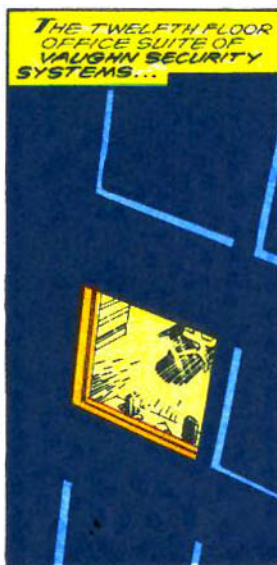
WONDER WHO ALL'S **INSIDE**? JACK CLAIMED THEY'RE **REFUGEES** FROM THE **STRANGER'S LAB-WORLD**. ANY OF THE ONES I **MET**?

WHAT IF ONE OF THEM TURNS OUT TO BE THE **COSMIC ASSASSIN** EON APPOINTED ME TO **SAFEGUARD** HIM FROM?

IF ONLY I HAD SOMEPLACE TO TAKE THEM **OTHER** THAN EARTH...









SERGEI-- THIS MAN IS STILL ALIVE.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH HIM?

HE IS INCONSEQUENTIAL. DO WITH HIM AS YOU WILL.

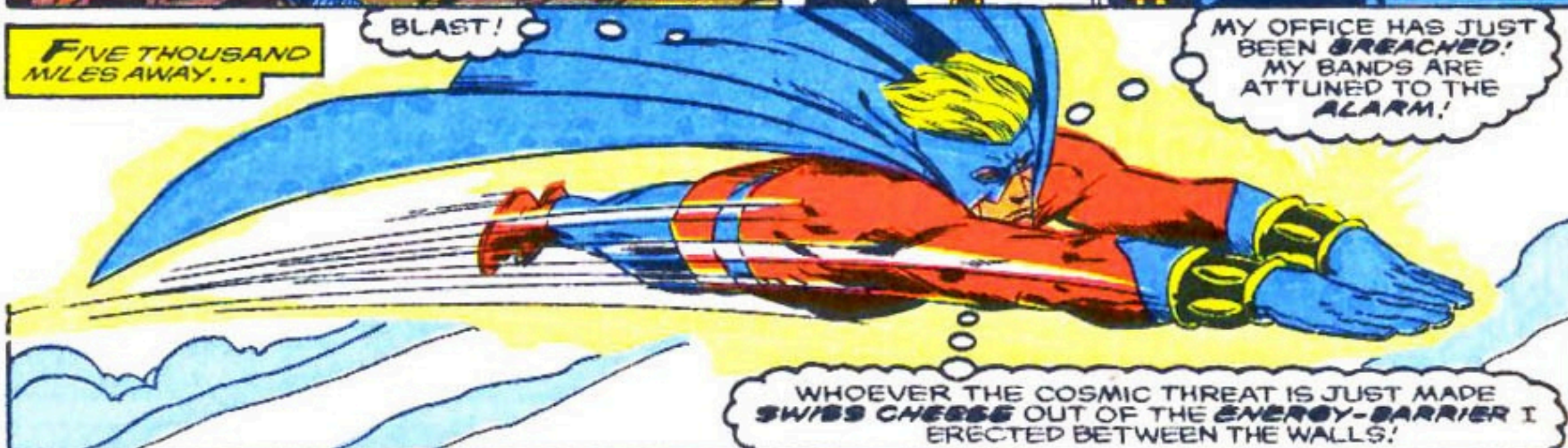
STAND GUARD AGAINST ALL INTRUDERS, MY LOVE. I GO TO RIP THE COSMOS OF THE EXECRABLE SON!



FIVE THOUSAND MILES AWAY...

BLAST!

MY OFFICE HAS JUST BEEN BREACHED! MY BANDS ARE ATTUNED TO THE ALARM!



WHOEVER THE COSMIC THREAT IS JUST MADE SWISS CHEESE OUT OF THE ENERGY-BARRIER I ERECTED BETWEEN THE WALLS!



SON! HOW YOU DOING? I'M STILL FIVE MINUTES OR SO AWAY!

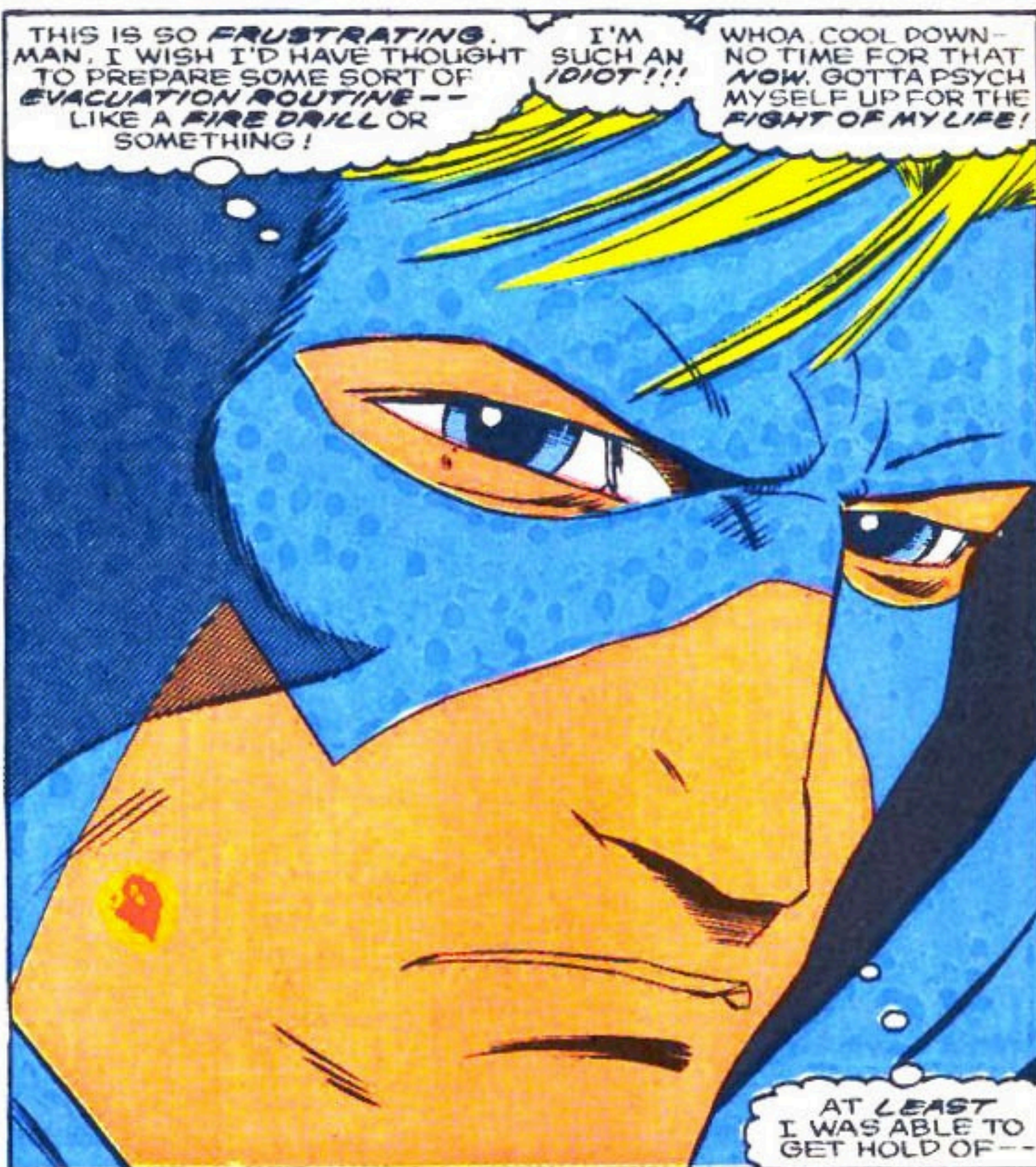
IS THERE ANY EVASIVE MANEUVER-- ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO HIDE FROM THE ASSASSIN ONCE HE MAKES IT THROUGH THE PORTAL?

I'LL TRY.

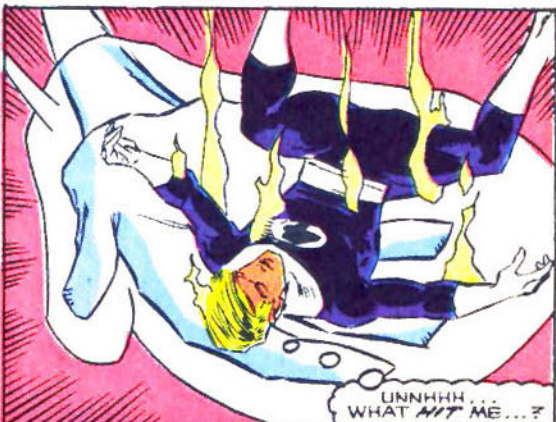
THIS IS SO FRUSTRATING. MAN, I WISH I'D HAVE THOUGHT TO PREPARE SOME SORT OF EVACUATION ROUTINE-- LIKE A FIRE DRILL OR SOMETHING!

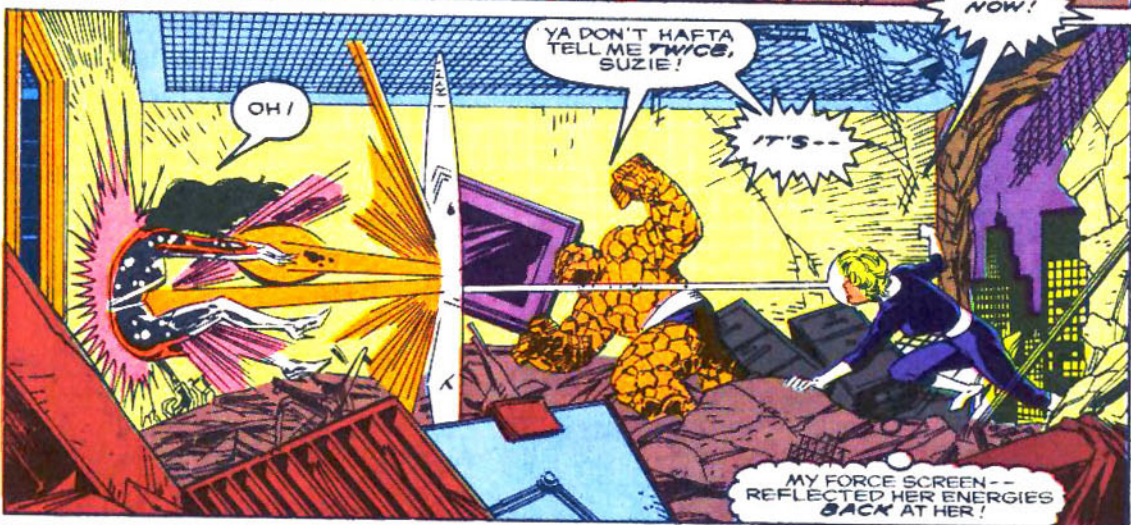
I'M SUCH AN IDIOT!!!

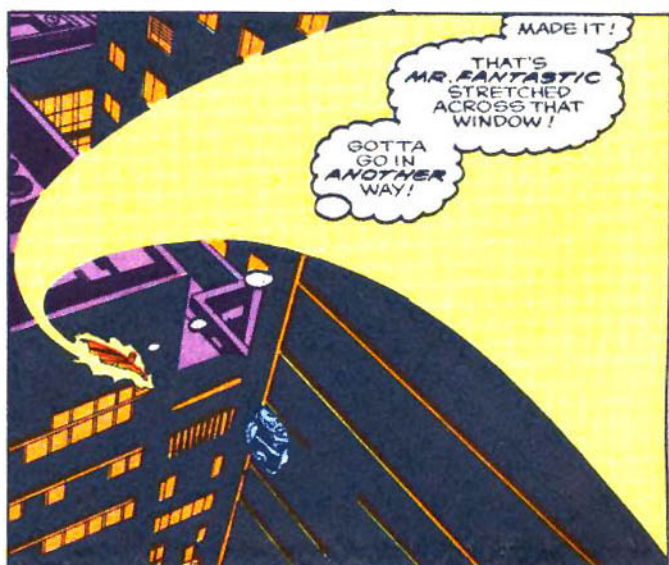
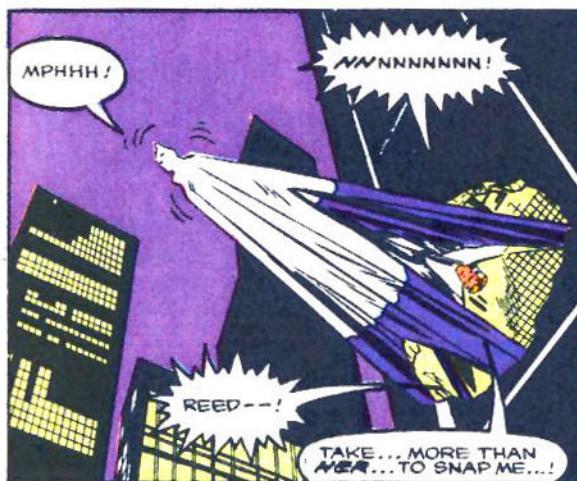
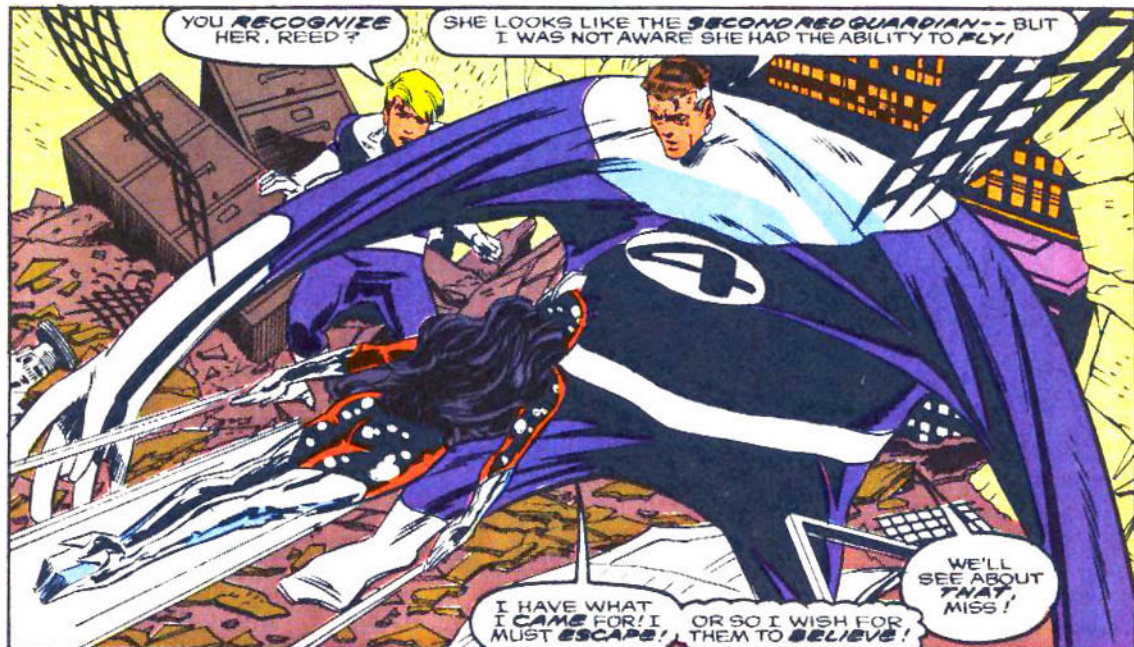
WHOA. COOL DOWN-- NO TIME FOR THAT NOW. GOTTA PSYCH MYSELF UP FOR THE FIGHT OF MY LIFE!



AT LEAST I WAS ABLE TO GET HOLD OF--









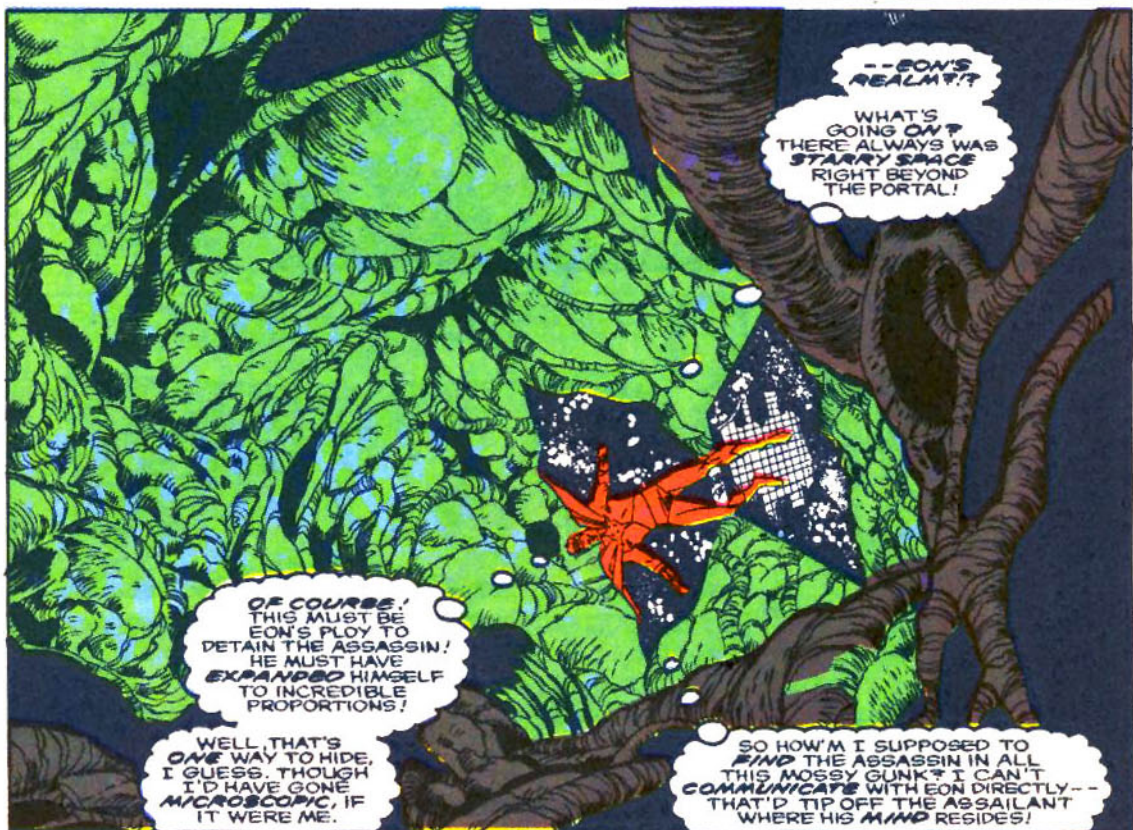
HEY! WUZZAT!

SOMETHIN'S GOIN' ON IN THE NEXT ROOM!



A HOLE BLOWN RIGHT THROUGH THE BOOKCASE.

THE ASSASSIN MUST'VE BEEN IN A BIG HURRY TO GET INTO--



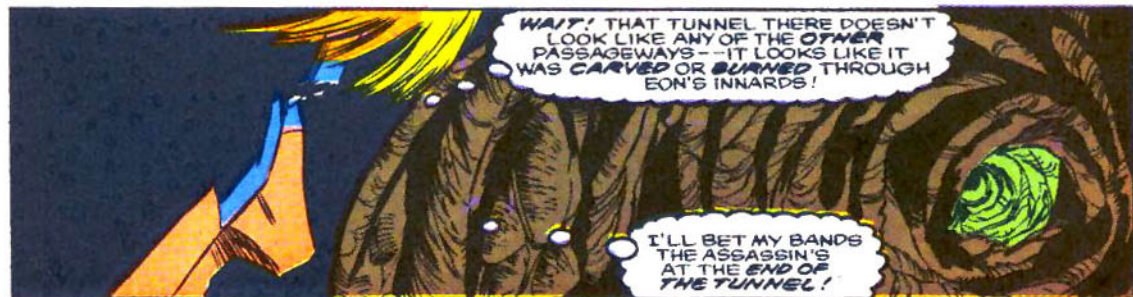
--EON'S REALM?!

WHAT'S GOING ON? THERE ALWAYS WAS STARRY SPACE RIGHT BEYOND THE PORTAL!

OF COURSE! THIS MUST BE EON'S PLOY TO DETAIN THE ASSASSIN! HE MUST HAVE EXPANDED HIMSELF TO INCREDIBLE PROPORTIONS!

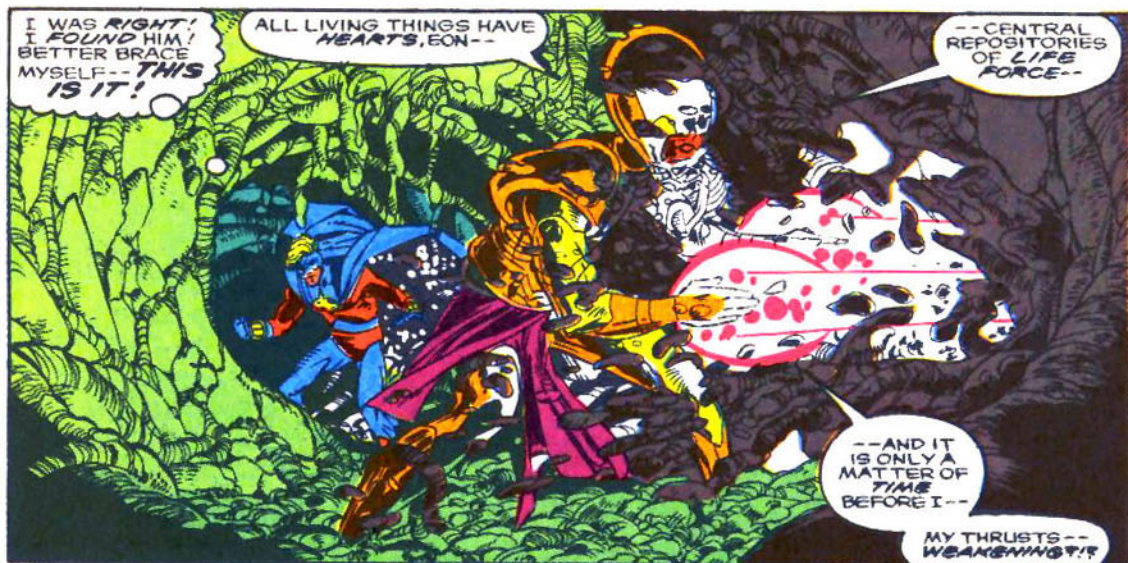
WELL, THAT'S ONE WAY TO HIDE, I GUESS. THOUGH I'D HAVE GONE MICROSCOPIC, IF IT WERE ME.

SO HOW'M I SUPPOSED TO FIND THE ASSASSIN IN ALL THIS MOSSY GUNK? I CAN'T COMMUNICATE WITH EON DIRECTLY-- THAT'D TIP OFF THE ASSAILANT WHERE HIS MIND RESIDES!



WAIT! THAT TUNNEL THERE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE ANY OF THE OTHER PASSAGEWAYS--IT LOOKS LIKE IT WAS CARVED OR BURNED THROUGH EON'S INNARDS!

I'LL BET MY BANDS THE ASSASSIN'S AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL!



I WAS RIGHT!
I FOUND HIM!
BETTER BRACE
MYSELF-- **THIS**
IS IT!

ALL LIVING THINGS HAVE
HEARTS, EON--

--CENTRAL
REPOSITORIES
OF LIFE
FORCE--

--AND IT
IS ONLY A
MATTER OF
TIME
BEFORE I--

MY THRUSTS--
WEAKENING?!



YOU!?!?

THAT'S RIGHT, EGGMAN!
TAPPING INTO THE ENERGY
YOU'RE GENERATING!

DARE NOT COUNTER
WITH BLASTS OF
MY OWN-- THIS IS EON
I'M FIGHTING IN!
DON'T WANT TO HIT
ANYTHING VITAL!



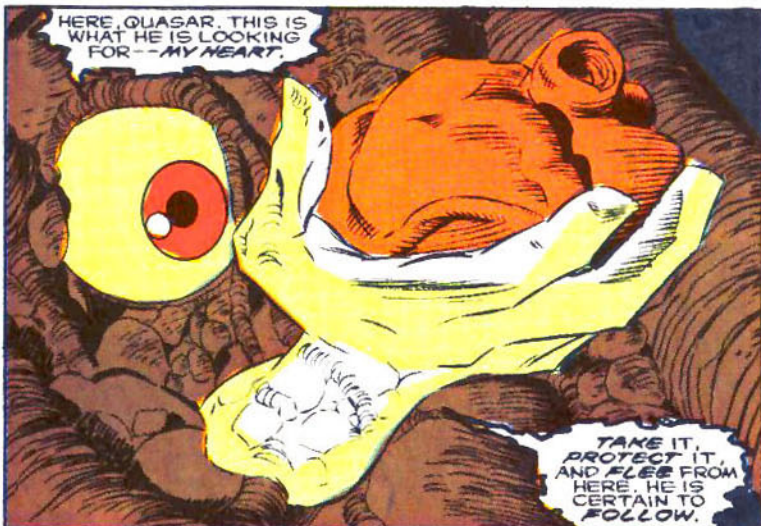
HAVE TO
DO THE OLD
ENCOMPASS--
THE ENEMY IN--
A BUBBLE
TRICK!

EON! I'M
HERE! HOW
YOU
DOING?!

I AM
ALIVE.



GREAT! UH, I EITHER WANT TO GET YOU AWAY FROM
THE ASSASSIN OR THE ASSASSIN OUT OF YOU WITHOUT
DOING ANY MORE DAMAGE, WHICH DO YOU THINK WOULD
BE EASIER?



HERE, QUASAR, THIS IS
WHAT HE IS LOOKING
FOR-- MY HEART.

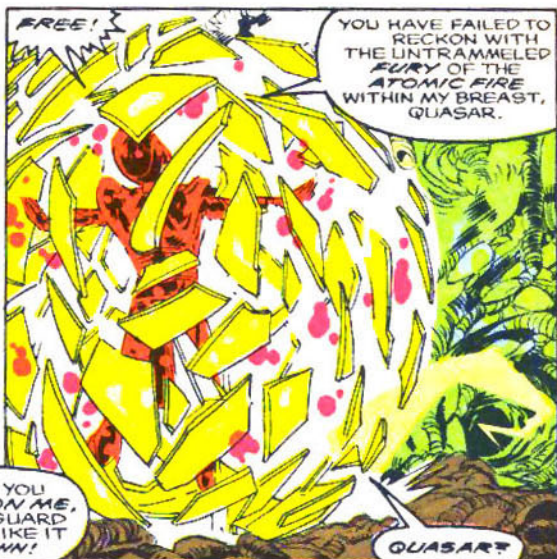
TAKE IT,
PROTECT IT,
AND FLEE FROM
HERE. HE IS
CERTAIN TO
FOLLOW.



UH... ARE YOU
SURE ABOUT
THIS? CAN YOUR
BODY LIVE WITH
YOUR HEART...
DETACHED?

YES. I CAN SUSPEND
MY LIFE FUNCTIONS FOR
APPROXIMATELY 3.14
OF YOUR EARTHLY
HOURS.

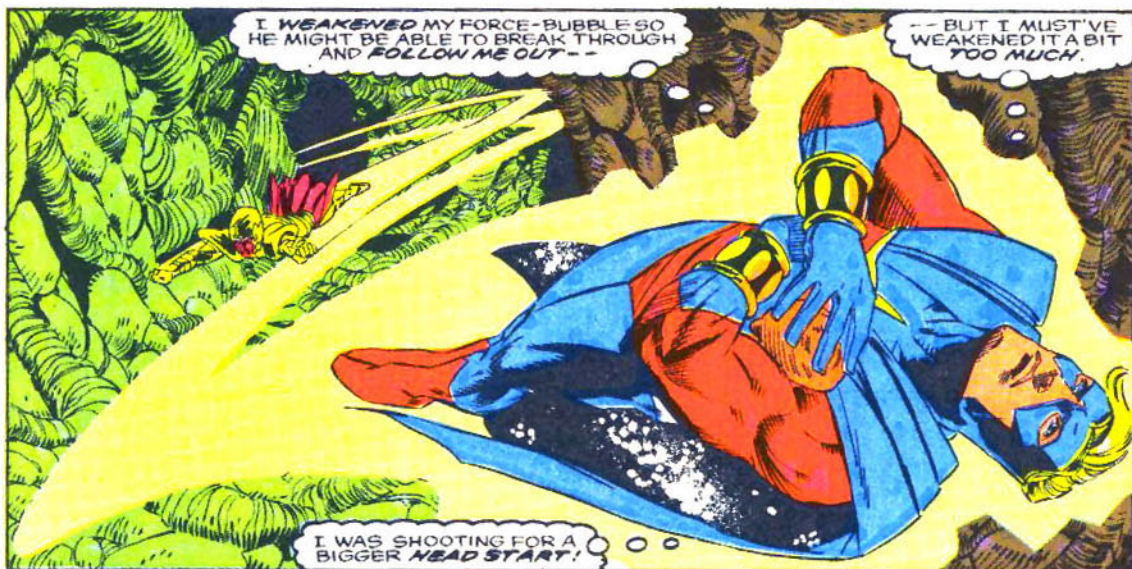
WELL, OKAY. YOU
CAN COUNT ON ME,
EON -- I'LL GUARD
YOUR HEART LIKE IT
WAS MY OWN!



FREE!

YOU HAVE FAILED TO
RECKON WITH
THE UNTRAMMELED
FURY OF THE
ATOMIC FIRE
WITHIN MY BREAST,
QUASAR.

QUASAR?



I WEAKENED MY FORCE-BUBBLE SO
HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO BREAK THROUGH
AND FOLLOW ME OUT --

-- BUT I MUST'VE
WEAKENED IT A BIT
TOO MUCH.

I WAS SHOOTING FOR A
BIGGER HEAD START!



YOU
UNWITTING
DUPE! THE
ENTITY YOU
SERVE IS EVIL!

HE HOLDS
THE SECRET
THAT
WILL CAUSE
THE UNIVERSE
TO COLLAPSE! I
HAVE IT ON
THE HIGHEST
AUTHORITY!



WHAT WAS HE
BABBING
ABOUT?

WHOA --!
QUASAR!?

GET OUT OF
THE WAY, SIR!
THERE'S A DEVIL
NIPPING AT
MY HEELS!



BEN GRIMM! HE'S ONE OF THE MOST **DEPENDABLE** GUYS IN THE BUSINESS AS WELL AS BEING AN **OLD FRIEND**!

BEN!

QUASAR? WHAT'RE YOU--



NO TIME TO **EXPLAIN**. HIDE THIS AND **GUARD** IT WITH YOUR **LIFE**!

HUH? OH... YA GOT IT, JUNIOR!



WHOOSH

WHAT IN THE NAME O' MY AUNT PETUNIA IS THIS -- A **PICKLED MOOSE HEART**??

BETTER **HIDE** IT!



YOU CANNOT HOPE TO **ELUDE** ME, QUASAR! I SHALL FOLLOW YOUR TRAIL TO THE **EDGE OF THE COSMOS**!

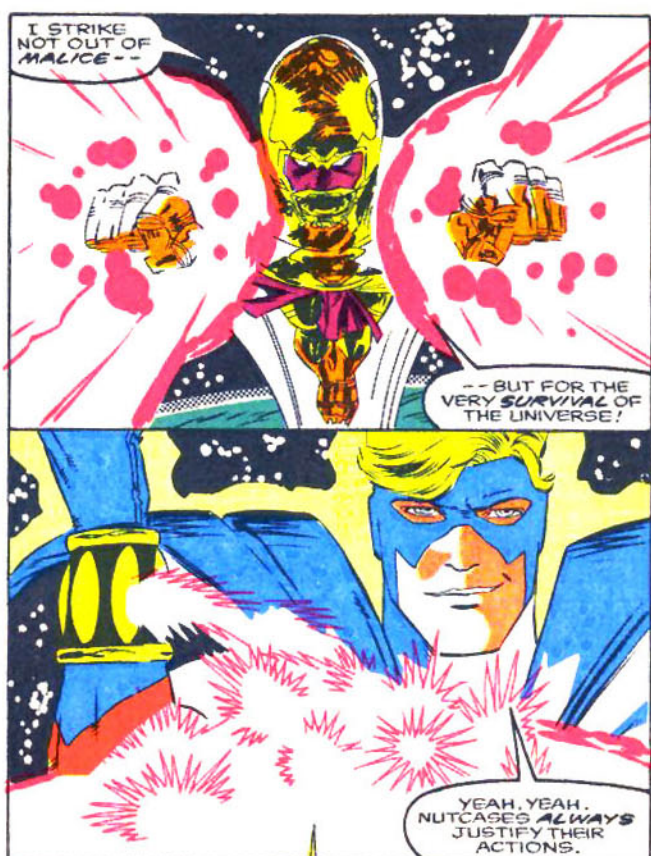
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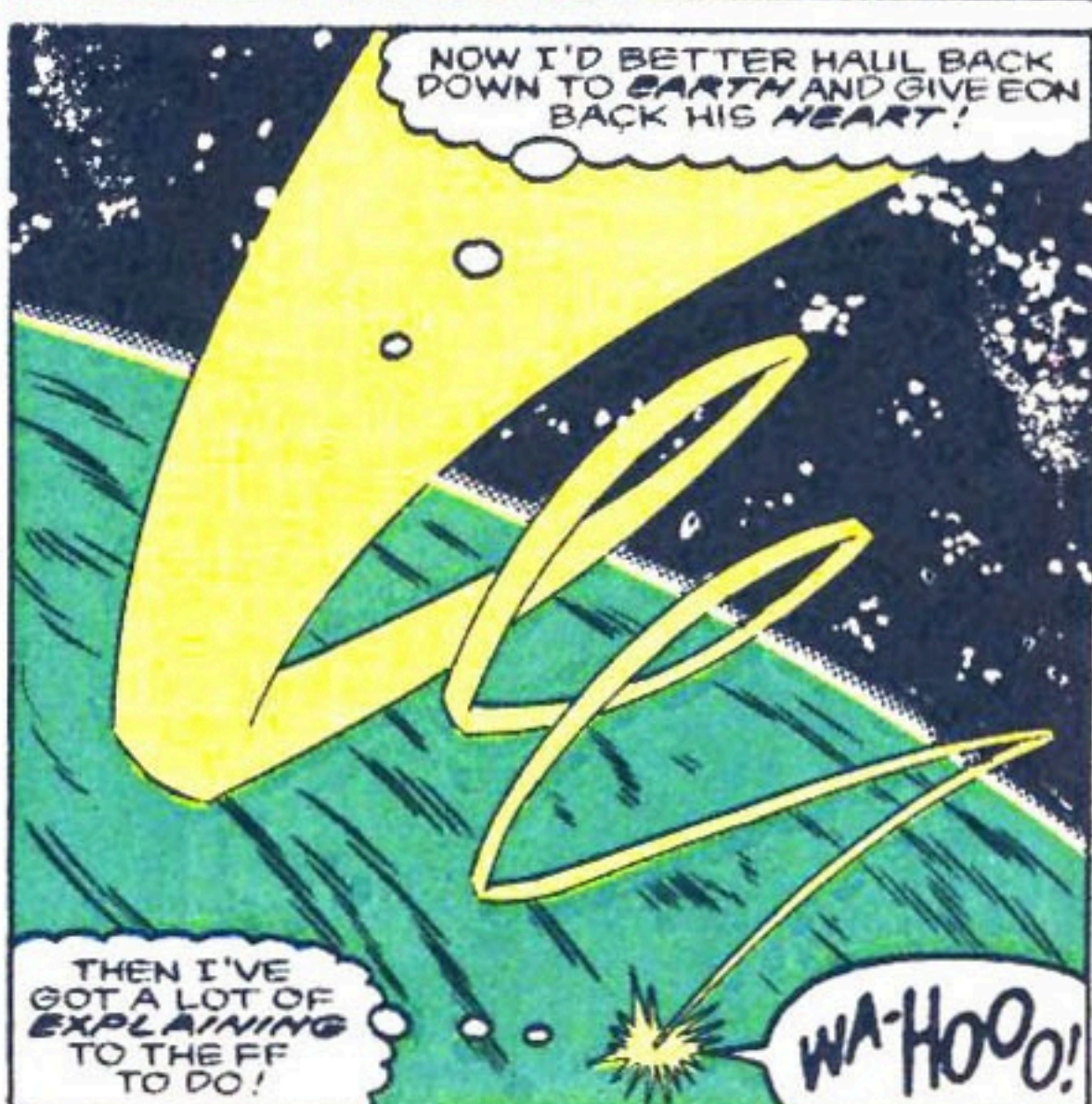
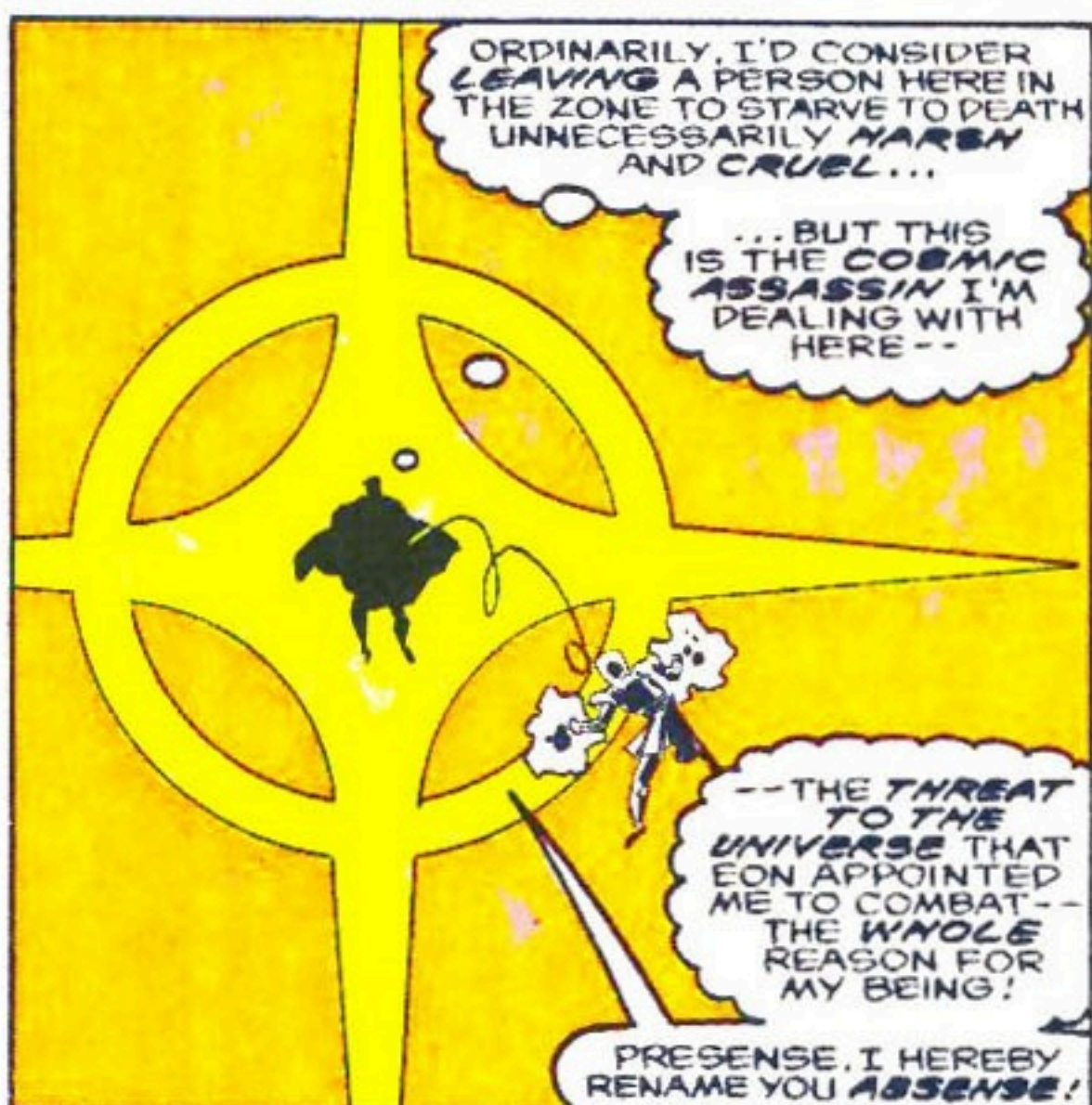


WHEW AND A **HALF**! MY GAMBLE SEEMS TO HAVE **PAID OFF**!

PREZ DIDN'T EXPECT ME TO BE SO **FOOLHARDY** AS TO PASS EON'S HEART TO **SOMEONE ELSE**.

NOW TO LEAD HIM ON A **MERRY CHASE** BACK UP TO THE **EXOSPHERE**!



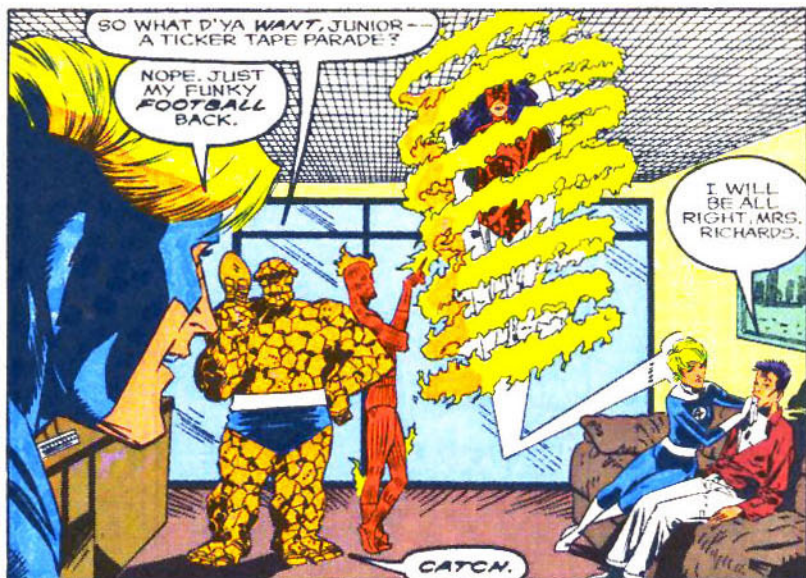




FIND...

HEY,
FLASH!

I'M
BACK!



SO WHAT D'YA WANT, JUNIOR--
A TICKER TAPE PARADE?

NOPE. JUST
MY FUNKY
FOOTBALL
BACK.

I WILL
BE ALL
RIGHT, MRS.
RICHARDS.

CATCH.



NOW FER THE LUVVA PETE, HOW
'BOUT **EXPLAININ'** T'US WHAT THE
HECK'S GOIN' ON AROUND HERE!



YES. I'D BE MOST
INTERESTED IN
HEARING IT.

--PARTICULARLY
WHAT THAT
**EXTRA-
DIMENSIONAL
PORTAL** IS
DOING IN MY
BUILDING
WITHOUT MY
KNOWLEDGE.

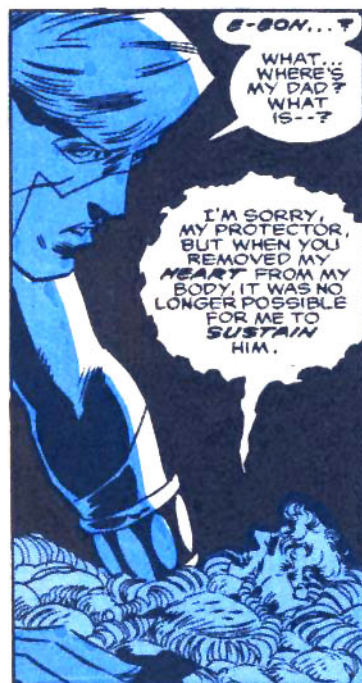
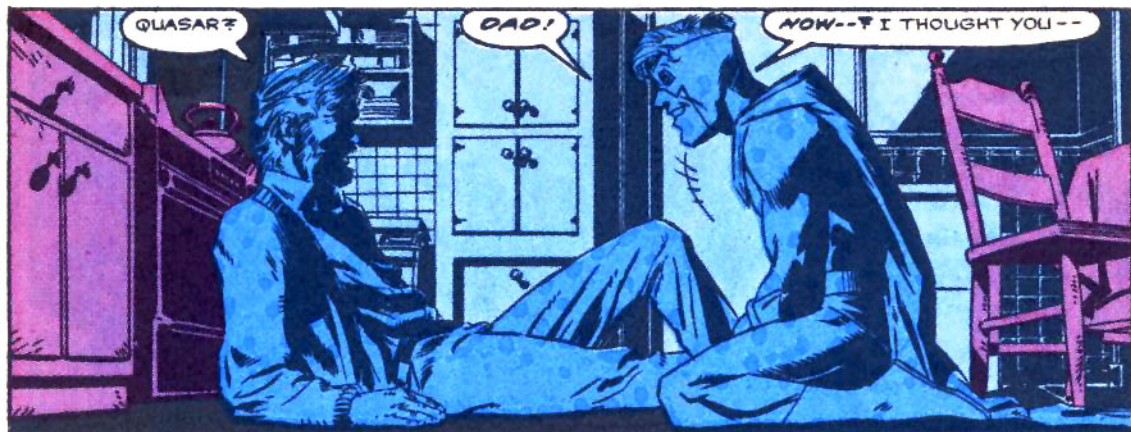


GEE, DR. RICHARDS, I MUST'VE
MISSED THE PART IN MY LEASE THAT
SAID "NO EXTRADIMENSIONAL
PORTALS ALLOWED."

LOOK, I'LL
ANSWER
ALL OF YOUR
QUESTIONS IN
A MINUTE.

FIRST I HAVE
TO GET THIS
HEART BACK TO
ITS EIGHT
BILLION YEAR OLD
OWNER!







AWARE OF YOUR EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO THIS MAN, I FELT THAT COPING WITH HIS DEMISE WOULD IMPAIR YOUR ABILITY TO PERFORM AS PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE.

IS THAT *SO* WELL, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT?

I QUIT--AS OF RIGHT NOW!



YOU CANNOT. THE QUANTUM-BANDS ARE UNREMOVABLE UNTIL YOUR DEATH.

THEN MAYBE YOU'D BETTER KILL ME SO YOU CAN TAKE 'EM BACK!



I DO NOT KILL. IF YOU THINK I KILLED YOUR FATHER, I ASSURE YOU.

IF YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM FROM ME, THEN I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP THEM!

BUT AS OF RIGHT NOW, EON-- I'M NO LONGER YOUR COSMIC WHIPPING BOY! GET OUT OF HERE-- I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!



BUT I AM UNCERTAIN IF THE PRESENCE WAS TRULY THE COSMIC THREAT--!

YOU'RE JUST SAYING THAT! WHY SHOULD I BELIEVE ANYTHING YOU HAVE TO SAY ANYMORE?

NOW... GET... LOST!

SPUTT

SOMEWHERE ON EARTH, AN ANOMALOUS FIGURE EAVESDROPS...

MY PLAN PROCEEDS APACE. IN ONE NIGHT, I HAVE NOT ONLY CAUSED QUASAR TO DROP HIS GUARD AGAINST THE THREAT HE WAS APPOINTED TO COMBAT.

-- BUT I HAVE ALSO DRIVEN A WEDGE BETWEEN MY TWO GREATEST ADVERSARIES.



NOW, BY THE TIME THEY REALIZE WHAT I'VE DONE, IT WILL BE TOO LATE!

NEXT: **THE ENEMY REVEALED!**